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## **KHPA Board sends to Legislature health reform plan to decrease number of uninsured Kansans**

As the leading agency on health and health care, the Kansas Health Policy Authority Board has approved a legislative package that increases accessibility of health care to Kansans and seeks to reduce the number of uninsured Kansans. This package, approved yesterday by the Health for All Kansans Steering Committee, is a short-term health reform plan, with a larger and more expansive long-term reform plan coming in the fall of 2007 by the Kansas Health Policy Authority (KHPA).

“We already have health coverage for all Kansans, through our emergency rooms, but it is the most expensive and shifts the cost burden from the uninsured to the insured. Our goal is to bring reform that provides coverage to all Kansans through a more efficient and affordable means,” said Connie Hubbell, Chairperson of the Kansas Health Policy Authority Board.

“The package that we will be sending to the Legislature this session is a down payment plan for a more broad long-term reform package to be announced in November,” stated Marci Nielsen, PhD, MPH, Executive Director of the Kansas Health Policy Authority. “The Health Policy Authority has embraced the charge given to us by the Legislature and the Governor to provide affordable access to health for all Kansans. There is more work to be done, and we will be working in partnership with stakeholders to develop Kansas-specific reform options.”

This legislative package approved for introduction this session is estimated to decrease the number of uninsured by ten percent. Currently, there are 300,000 Kansans who are uninsured. The package includes:

- Early detection and screening for newborns
- Medicaid outreach and enrollment expansion
- Consideration of Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) flexibilities
- Cover Kansas pregnant women, children and/or low-income families through premium assistance
- Promote price and quality transparency
- Increase health information technology/exchange (HIT/HIE)

“There’s a health care crisis in our state, and it’s going to take effort from all of us to make quality health care affordable again,” said Governor Kathleen Sebelius. “I want to thank the members of the steering committee for their hard work in putting this package together. It’s a good first step toward meeting my goal of affordable health coverage for all Kansans. I urge the Legislature to take these important steps, this year and will continue working with the steering committee to develop multi-year coverage for all Kansans,” said Sebelius.

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Yesterday, the enabling legislation, charging the KHPA to direct development of “Health for All Kansans” legislation for adoption in 2008 and implementation in 2009 and 2010, was passed out of Senate Health Care Strategies Committee. The legislation also calls for the KHPA to provide analysis of the Kansas Health Care Insurance Connector, a model for a voluntary health insurance connector, and other health reform and transformation options. It is Substitute for SB 309.

“The Kansas Health Care Insurance Connector offers the best opportunity to bring forward transformational change in health care so that more Kansans can be insured in a fiscally sustainable manner,” said Senator Jim Barnett, member of the Health for All Kansans Steering Committee. “The groundwork has been laid to make true progress for both short-term and long-term health care reform.”

Between April 1 and November of 2007, KHPA will develop health reform options as outlined in the enabling legislation, in collaboration with the four Advisory Councils. Analysis for these reform options will be provided by national experts with experience in state health reform. By November 1, 2007, KHPA will deliver the health reform options to the Board, Governor, and legislative leadership for their consideration.

The short-term health reform package will be introduced in the Senate Ways and Means and House Appropriations Committees for consideration this session.

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